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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Security Council
Sixty-second year

Letter dated 15 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Sao Tome and Principe to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the current Chairman of the Committee, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the report of the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which was held from 14 to 18 May 2007 in the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe (see annex).

I should like to request you to have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 101 (e) of the preliminary list of items to be included in the provisional agenda of the sixty-second session, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ovidio Manuel Barbosa **Pequeño**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/62/50.

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Annex to the letter dated 15 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Sao Tome and Principe to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa on its twenty-fifth ministerial meeting in Sao Tome, 14-18 May 2007

Introduction

The twenty-fifth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Sao Tome, Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, from 14 to 18 May 2007.

The following member States took part in the meeting: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Gabonese Republic, the Republic of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. The Central African Republic was absent. The Republic of Chad, although unable to be present, nevertheless transmitted its contribution to the proceedings.

The opening ceremony featured:

- A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out by Ms. Agnès Marcaillou, Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General at the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting;
- A message from the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), read out by Mr. Nelson Cosme, Under-Secretary-General for Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability.

The opening address was delivered by H.E. Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

The Committee took much of its inspiration from proposals made in that address, in particular the idea of an initiative to draft a legal instrument on small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa. It decided to name the initiative the "Sao Tome initiative".

Summary of proceedings

I. Adoption of the agenda

5. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda of the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman.
4. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee:

(i) Republic of Burundi;

(ii) Central African Republic;

(iii) Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(iv) Republic of Chad.

5. Consideration of the situation in Darfur and its impact on countries members of the Committee.

6. Developments relating to security in the Great Lakes region.

7. Inter-State security cooperation among the Central African countries:

(i) Report on preparations for the Bahr-el-Ghazal joint military exercise (November 2007);

(ii) Measures to combat cross-border crime;

(iii) Briefing on the conclusions of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) Seminar on Cross-border Security Problems;

(iv) Consideration of the project for a subregional conference on cross-border security problems.

8. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa:

(i) Reports on the implementation of the Programme of Priority Activities for the implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;

(ii) Relationship between the Programme of Priority Activities and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region;

(iii) Participation by ECCAS in the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures;

(iv) Project for the drafting of a legal instrument on small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa;

(v) Project for the drafting of a code of conduct for defence and security forces in Central Africa;

(vi) Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Central Africa.

9. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms; (strengthening of the Supreme Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), status of the ratifications of the protocol on COPAX, operationalization of the Central African Early Warning System (MARAC).

10. Exchange of views on methods of work and the programme of work: revitalization and rationalization of activities.

11. Date and place of the next meeting.

12. Other matters.

13. Adoption of the report of the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting.

II. Election of the Bureau

The Committee elected a Bureau comprised of the following countries:

- Chairman: Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe
- First Vice-Chairman: Republic of Cameroon
- Second Vice-Chairman: Republic of Angola
- Rapporteur: Republic of Gabon

III. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman

The Committee noted with interest the report on the activities of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman. It commended the dynamism with which the Bureau had performed its duties and, in particular, its active contribution, in cooperation with the secretariat, to the revitalization of the Committee's activities and the preparation and organization of the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting. The Committee commended the outgoing Bureau for the competence and skill with which it had guided the work.

IV. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee

Developments in the situation in Central Africa, particularly in the countries covered by this geopolitical and security review, have shown sharp contracts since the Committee's previous meeting. Despite some genuine advances in the peace processes under way, the persistence of tension, the deterioration of the security situation, and the resurgence of frequent armed confrontations highlight the fragility of peace in the countries covered.

The at times dramatic degradation of the humanitarian situation and the persistence of serious human rights violations are particularly alarming.

The situation manifestly requires the parties concerned, the other countries of the subregion and the international community to redouble their efforts to promote national reconciliation, build peace and usher in a new era of development for peoples who have been victims of the scourge of war for too long.

(i) Republic of Burundi

The Committee welcomed the progress achieved in the situation in Burundi, in particular:

(a) The progress on the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement signed on 7 September 2006 in Dar es Salaam between the Government of Burundi and Mr. Agathon Rwasa's Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL);

(b) The efforts to improve relations between the Government and the media, relations between political parties and relations with civil society;

(c) The release of former dignitaries arrested on the charge of preparing a coup d'état;

(d) The noticeable easing of political tension and the progress made in implementing the policy of national reconciliation;

(e) The pursuit of the disarmament and demobilization process and the progress achieved in disbanding militias.

The Committee welcomed the improvement of the military and security situation in Burundi. However, it deplored the continued lack of security in the country owing to the proliferation of firearms among the population and delays in implementing the Agreement. It urged the Government and PALIPEHUTU-FNL to ensure that the Agreement was fully implemented and to continue to cooperate closely in a spirit of openness in order to reach a solution to all outstanding problems. It also invited the South African mediator, the members of the regional peace initiative and the other partners to lend support to the smooth implementation of the Agreement.

The Committee encouraged the Government to continue the efforts already under way to strengthen the democratic process in Burundi, in particular by pursuing the dialogue with the political parties, cooperating with civil society, ensuring respect for the rule of law and human rights, including freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and promoting national reconciliation.

It also encouraged PALIPEHUTU-FNL to honour its commitments and to work with determination towards the full implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement in order to expedite the return of a comprehensive peace in Burundi and to alleviate the suffering of the people.

It welcomed the measures taken by the Government of Burundi to prosecute the perpetrators of human rights violations and urged it to bring to justice, without exception, anyone guilty of such acts. It also welcomed the positive impact of the peace accord between the Government of Burundi and PALIPEHUTU-FNL on security conditions and protection of human rights.

It encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to tackle the country's acute socio-economic problems and resolve serious conflicts over land ownership and use.

It launched an urgent appeal to the international community and donors to provide all necessary support to the country in the implementation of its emergency and rehabilitation programme, its economic recovery and development programme, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, the National Peacebuilding Strategy and the rapid completion of the programme for the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

(ii) Central African Republic

The Committee expressed its deep concern about the instability characterizing the situation in the Central African Republic.

It encouraged the authorities and all the political actors to give priority to dialogue, resolve their differences peacefully and work towards the strengthening of peace and democracy in the Central African Republic.

The Committee welcomed the decision of President Bozize to initiate an inclusive dialogue with the opposition parties and the representatives of armed rebel groups. It encouraged the Panel of the Wise to pursue, with the help of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), the efforts to organize that dialogue.

It also welcomed the meetings organized with the help of BONUCA between the Government and the political parties which have helped to ease tensions.

However, it expressed grave concern about the deterioration of the security situation in the Central African Republic, in particular:

(a) The activities of armed gangs, and "road blockers" and the repeated attacks by rebels in the north, north-east, north-west and centre of the country, which result in multiple human rights violations;

(b) Armed groups' repeated violations of territorial integrity in the north, north-east and north-west of the country;

(c) The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the north-east;

(d) The growing number of murders and armed robberies.

The Committee condemned the actions of the rebellion and rejected any attempt to take power by anticonstitutional means.

It appealed to the international community to give the Central African Republic the support necessary to secure its borders and improve the overall security situation, notably by restructuring the national defence and security forces and strengthening their operational capacities. The Committee welcomed the contribution of the Central African Multinational Force (FOMUC) of CEMAC to efforts to restore peace and security in the Central African Republic and called for its mandate to be extended beyond 30 June 2007. It urged the international community to provide all necessary support to the Multinational Force and if appropriate, to ECCAS, in order to help the Central African Republic tackle the lack of security in its territory.

The Committee welcomed the decision of the United Nations to deploy an operation to secure the borders of the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan and the dispatch in this connection of a multidisciplinary technical assessment mission to the region.

It expressed concern at the steady deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Central African Republic as a result of the insecurity caused by armed rebel movements and retaliatory actions by the Central African armed forces.

In the socio-economic sphere, the Committee appealed to bilateral and multilateral donors and international financial institutions to pay special attention to the economic and financial situation of the Central African Republic and to provide it with the necessary support.

(iii) Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Committee welcomed the significant progress made in the implementation of the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the successful completion of the electoral process with the peaceful holding of the presidential election and the legislative, provincial and senatorial elections. It applauded the political, financial, technical and logistical efforts made by the international community in that regard and congratulated the Congolese people on their maturity and sense of civic responsibility.

The Committee deplored the deadly clashes that had taken place from 22 to 24 March 2007 in Kinshasa between guards of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) assigned to protect former Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba and the other FARDC soldiers, which had resulted in numerous civilian and military victims. It urged the country's political leaders to give priority to conciliation and harmony in the best interests of the Congolese people.

The Committee expressed concern at the continued precarious security situation in some provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and northern Katanga.

It condemned the acts of violence that had occurred in Bas-Congo, causing many civilian and military victims. It also regretted the resistance to *brassage* of armed groups in FARDC in the eastern part of the country.

It welcomed the *mixage* of General Laurent Nkunda's forces with FARDC in North Kivu and called for continued efforts towards a complete *brassage* of those forces.

The Committee expressed concern at the weak operational capacities of FARDC in the light of the scale of security problems in the country and called on the international community to provide urgent assistance to the Government in the implementation of reform of the security sector with a view to the establishment of well-managed professional security agencies that showed due respect for the law and human rights.

The Committee urged the political leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the opposition parties to respect the principles of transparency, openness and tolerance and to avoid the use of violence.

The Committee expressed concern at the persistence of allegations of serious violations of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It welcomed the measures taken by the authorities to combat impunity and urged them to pursue such measures, ensuring that everyone guilty of such violations was, without distinction, prosecuted.

The Committee also expressed deep concern at the scale of the humanitarian crisis in the country and urged donors to provide substantial assistance to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to enable it to deal with the situation.

(iv) Republic of Chad

The Committee expressed deep concern at the multiple destabilization attempts against Chad owing to repeated attacks by rebel groups based in Darfur and abuse perpetrated by militias against the civilian population.

It nevertheless welcomed some signs of progress in the situation in Chad, including:

(a) The conclusion of peace agreements between the Government of Chad and some factions of the political-military opposition and the consequent integration into the February 2007 Government of senior officials of that opposition;

(b) The continuation of diplomatic activity to defuse the crisis between Chad and the Sudan;

(c) The efforts made to relaunch the process relating to the Tripoli Agreement of 8 February 2006 on the normalization of relations between Chad and the Sudan;

(d) The signature on 2 May 2007 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, of a peace agreement between Chad and the Sudan.

The Committee expressed deep concern at the multifaceted humanitarian crisis in eastern and southern Chad, with multiple acts of abuse against Sudanese and Central African refugees and persons displaced by the Janjaweed militias.

It condemned the grave human rights violations perpetrated against refugees, displaced persons, civilian populations and humanitarian workers in eastern Chad. It appealed to the international community and the United Nations to help the Government of Chad ensure the safety of refugees from Darfur living in camps in Chad, provide greater assistance to them and guarantee the camps' neutrality.

It welcomed in this regard the dispatch to the region by the Secretary-General of the United Nations of two assessment missions to prepare the expected deployment of a multidisciplinary United Nations presence in the area pursuant to Security Council resolution 1706 (2006).

V. Consideration of the situation in Darfur and its impact on countries members of the Committee

The Committee noted with profound concern information about the deterioration of the situation in Darfur and its far-reaching consequences for regional security, including:

(a) The influx of refugees and the deteriorating security situation in countries of the region;

(b) The growth of illegal cross-border movements of weapons and persons;

(c) The worsening environmental and security situation in areas close to the border, which seriously endangered civilians, displaced persons and refugees;

(d) The threats to the stability, security and territorial integrity of the Sudan's neighbours, particularly the Central African Republic and the Republic of Chad;

(e) The growing risk that the area where the three countries' borders met would become an area of unrest and a favourite haven of mercenaries, armed groups and rebels ready to take part in any action to destabilize the countries of the subregion.

The Committee appealed to the international community to increase its efforts to ensure that the borders between Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan were properly secured and that assistance to refugees and displaced persons, the main victims of hostilities in the region, was increased.

VI. Developments relating to the security in the Great Lakes region

At the subregional level and within the framework of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda), the Committee encouraged the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of Burundi and the Republic of Uganda to continue their efforts to cooperate more closely in combating the armed groups on their common borders.

It welcomed the strengthened cooperation between the Republic of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Burundi and the consequent improvement in the security situation in the Great Lakes region.

It noted with interest the information provided in this connection on the activities of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, the relaunch of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), the signature of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region and the regular exchange of high-level delegations between the countries of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission for the discussion of bilateral and subregional matters.

VII. Inter-State security cooperation among the Central African countries

(i) Report on preparations for the Bahr-el-Gazal joint military exercise (November 2007)

The Committee noted with interest the information provided to the ECCAS secretariat on the status of preparations for the Bahr-el-Gazal joint military exercise. It welcomed the assurances given to the Secretary-General of ECCAS by the Government of Chad regarding the deadline of November 2007 for holding the exercise.

(ii) Measures to combat cross-border crime

The Committee expressed profound concern at the persistence of border security problems in the subregion, including cross-border crime. It encouraged member countries to devise appropriate responses, particularly in the context of a concerted subregional approach the terms of which could be considered at the planned subregional conference.

The Committee took note of the information communicated by the Republic of Angola on the recent adoption of a law governing the conditions under which aliens might be present in that country.

(iii) Briefing on the conclusions of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) Seminar on Cross-border Security Problems

The Committee took note of the information communicated by the Office for Disarmament Affairs regarding the Seminar on Cross-border Security Problems planned within the framework of CEMAC, under the aegis of the Department of Political Affairs.

It also took note of the fact that the Seminar had not been held on the dates proposed, and it reiterated its wish to be informed of the Seminar's conclusions in order to consider ways of extending to ECCAS the security framework that would be suggested.

(iv) Consideration of the project for a subregional conference on cross-border security problems

The Committee discussed the project for a subregional conference on cross-border security problems which had been adopted by the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting in Kigali in 2007.

It took note of the information provided by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on the primary responsibility of the Department of Political Affairs in this matter and on the financial constraints which had hampered the convening of the conference owing to the lack of available resources in the trust fund.

The Committee nevertheless emphasized the scale of the cross-border security problems in Central Africa and the consequent risks the peace, security, stability and development of the countries of the subregion. It therefore decided that the conference should be organized during the next regular ministerial meeting, to be held in Yaoundé from 3 to 7 September 2007, to compensate for the lack of resources in the trust fund.

The ECCAS secretariat was authorized, through its relationship with the United Nations, to receive the funds required to cover the additional cost of organizing the conference.

VIII. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa

(i) Reports on the implementation of the Programme of Priority Activities for the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

The Committee took note with interest of the reports submitted by the member countries on the execution of the Programme of Priority Activities adopted at the end of the Brazzaville seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the

United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The Committee also took note of the reports submitted by the member countries on the implementation of the programmes for the disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and full socio-economic reintegration of former combatants. It welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the programmes. It encouraged the countries concerned to continue their efforts in that area and to be guided by their respective experiences.

The Committee emphasized the importance of the prompt and full implementation of the Programme of Priority Activities adopted in Brazzaville in 2003 and urged the member countries to make the necessary efforts in this respect to establish in Central Africa a small-arms-and-nuclear-weapons-free zone.

The Committee urged the member countries to redouble their efforts in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the national and subregional levels and appealed to the international community to provide the countries of the subregion with the necessary support for effectively combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

(ii) Relationship between the Programme of Priority Activities and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region

The Committee emphasized the similarity of the concerns expressed in the Programme of Priority Activities, adopted in 2003 in Brazzaville following the seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, adopted on 16 December 2006 in Nairobi.

It welcomed the fact that many of the measures advocated in the Pact overlapped with those in the Programme of Priority Activities, including:

- The institution of development border basins and the promotion of human security in the region;
- The disarmament and repatriation of all the armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- The disarming of armed nomadic herdsmen;
- The promotion of common policies to end the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons;
- Mine clearance and mine action in the region.

(iii) Participation by ECCAS in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and in the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures

The Committee took note of the briefing by the ECCAS secretariat on the participation of member countries in the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons and the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures.

It deplored the fact that only eight of the countries of the subregion participated in the Register and none participated in the standardized instrument for

reporting military expenditures. It again urged them to participate in those two important instruments, which contribute to the promotion of peace, security and stability through transparency in arms flows and military expenditures.

(iv) Project for the drafting of a legal instrument on small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa

The Committee took note with interest of the briefing by the ECCAS secretariat and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on the project for the drafting of a legal instrument on small arms and light weapons control in Central Africa.

It reaffirmed its support for the process and stressed the need to provide the region with a binding legal instrument that would take due account of the specific requirements of the member countries and their diverse concerns and experiences in this regard.

The Committee welcomed the partnership entered into by the ECCAS secretariat and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, in particular the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, and encouraged them to conclude at an early date a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between the two institutions.

The Committee expressed the hope that work on drafting the legal instrument would begin as soon as possible.

(v) Project for the drafting to a code of conduct for defence and security forces in Central Africa

The Committee took note with interest of the briefing by the ECCAS secretariat and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on the project for the drafting of a code of conduct for defence and security forces in Central Africa specifically tailored to the geopolitical situation and security requirements of the subregion.

It stressed the importance of such an instrument, which would enhance the professionalism and sense of responsibility of the defence and security forces vis-à-vis the State and the citizenry and would build capacity in the areas of civic education, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Committee urged the two institutions to conclude a memorandum of understanding to enable work on drafting the code of conduct to proceed.

(vi) Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Central Africa

The Committee took note of the briefing by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on the implementation in Central Africa of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), adopted on 28 April 2004, which highlighted the danger of terrorism and trafficking in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their vectors. It welcomed the participation of some of the members of the Committee in the seminar on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa, which had been held on 9 and 10 November 2006 in Accra, Ghana, with the support of the Regional Centre.

It encouraged the countries that had not participated in the Accra seminar to take an active part in the second seminar on the subject, which the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs was intending to organize in Africa in 2007.

IX. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms (strengthening of the Supreme Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), status of the ratifications of the Protocol on COPAX, operationalization of MARAC)

The Committee took note of the report by the ECCAS secretariat on the principal ECCAS activities in the human integration, peace, security and stability sectors.

It welcomed the progress made in the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms, in particular:

- The ongoing operationalization of the Central African Early Warning System (MARAC), with the recruitment of the officials required for starting its activities and the organization, thanks to the support of the European Union, of a seminar for training newly recruited personnel, the participants which included officials from the early warning systems of the African Union, ECOWAS, and the Conflict Settlement Centre of the University of Cape Town, South Africa;
- The establishment of the Directorate of Political and Diplomatic Actions, responsible for supporting member States in the implementation of peace and security instruments;
- The rise in importance of the ECCAS regional military staff headquarters owing to the study on the training system for military personnel in Central Africa, the organization of a seminar on the logistics of the Central African Multinational Force and the training of ECCAS forces within the framework of the SAWA 2006 exercise and the course on familiarization with equatorial forest conditions organized in Libreville in April 2007.

The Committee commended the strengthening of the ECCAS secretariat's role in the observation of elections in Central Africa, including:

- The observation in 2006 of the presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe and of the legislative elections in the Gabonese Republic;
- The organization of exploratory missions in the Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Cameroon and the Republic of Angola, with a view to the observation in those countries of elections planned for 2007 and 2008;
- The preparation of an observer's guide, to be submitted for approval to the Conference of Heads of State and Government, to be held in Brazzaville in June 2007.

The Committee commended the efforts made by ECCAS in the implementation of subregional peace and security mechanisms established under the aegis of the Committee and encouraged it to continue this work.

The Committee took note of the goal which ECCAS had set for itself of bringing all its instruments to maturity by 2010, which would enable it to assume its full role in the area of peace and security.

It welcomed the dynamic cooperation between ECCAS and the various multilateral partners, including the forthcoming signature of a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the ECCAS secretariat, which would serve as a framework for the joint preparation of specific projects.

X. Exchange of views on methods of work and the programme of work: revitalization and stabilization activities

The members of the Committee exchanged views on the question of revitalization of the Committee's activities and rationalization of its methods of work. It commended the regular organization by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs of consultations with the Permanent Representatives of States members of the Committee to the United Nations. It also took note of the briefing delivered by Ms. Marcaillou to the Security Council on behalf of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. It welcomed those actions, which increased the Committee's visibility and gave new impetus to its work.

It considered various innovative approaches for its meetings, including the possibility of devoting a whole meeting to a specific subject that was of particular importance or urgent in character.

The Committee advocated strengthened interactions between ECCAS and other subregional organizations through the invitation of the latter, if necessary, to meetings organized under the aegis of the Committee and ECCAS, and vice versa.

The Committee welcomed the appointment of Mr. Ivor Richard Fung, Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, as Secretary of the Committee and assured him of its wholehearted support for his work.

The Committee expressed deep concern at the lack of available resources in the trust fund intended for the financing of extrabudgetary activities. In that regard, it appealed to members and donors to contribute to the trust fund.

XI. Date and place of the next meeting

Pursuant to the decision taken at the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting in Kigali to the effect that, in case of the withdrawal of a State, an alternative solution would be to hold the meeting in Yaoundé (A/61/502, para. 55), and in the light of the statement of the Republic of Angola not to hold the twenty-sixth meeting on the dates scheduled, the Republic of Cameroon agreed to host the twenty-sixth meeting from 3 to 7 September 2007. The Republic of Angola undertook to host the twenty-seventh meeting in February 2008.

XII. Other matters

The Committee welcomed the information provided by the delegation of the Republic of the Congo regarding the appointment of H.E. Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of the Republic of the Congo, as United Nations-African Union Joint Special Representative in Darfur.

It took note with interest of the information on the briefing relating to the Committee's activities which was given by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to the Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, at the request of the Republic of the Congo, Chairman of the Working Group.

XIII. Adoption of the report of the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting

The Committee adopted the present report on 18 May 2007.

The closing statement was made by H.E. Mr. Carlos Gustavo dos Anjos, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities.

The following expression of thanks was read out:

"We, the representatives of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, assembled for the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting held from 14 to 18 May 2007 in Sao Tome, Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe,

"Reaffirm our commitment to the ideals of peace, security and stability, deeply cherished by our respective peoples, and to the socio-economic development of our subregion;

"Commend the individual and collective efforts of our countries to achieve peace, security, stability and development;

"Welcome the atmosphere of conviviality, brotherhood and mutual trust which has prevailed throughout our work;

"Express our thanks and deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and to the Government and people of Sao Tome and Principe for the warm welcome and fraternal hospitality we have received during our stay in the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe."

Done at Sao Tome on 18 May 2007